

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE CONNECTICUT'S ENVIRONMENT

The following recommendations are supported by data and analyses in the Council's 2023 annual report, [Environmental Quality in Connecticut](#).

### CLIMATE CHANGE

- **Expand efforts to more aggressively reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions:**
  - reduce the consumption of energy in all sectors;
  - expand the use of mass transit and electric-drive vehicles
  - reduce solid waste and increase the diversion of solid waste;
  - Increase urban forest canopy to reduce electric demand for cooling; and
  - Increase the development and use of renewable energy sources, such as solar, wind and hydroelectric, that do not produce GHG emissions.

It is estimated that total GHG emissions in 2022 (most recent data available) for all economic sectors increased by approximately seven percent from 2020 levels. Additional efforts to reduce the amount of solid waste, and the consumption of energy through energy conservation and the more efficient use of energy, should be prioritized over developing new sources of electric generation.

### NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

- **Promote nature-based solutions that:**
  - restore coastal habitats;
  - protect potable water sources;
  - increase carbon sequestration and protect forests and wetlands as carbon sinks;
  - meet open space and farmland preservation goals; and
  - increase climate-smart agriculture and soil conservation.

Nature based solutions, such as the preservation of open space land and farmland and forest management/urban forestry can help to combat climate change, reduce flood risk, improve water quality, protect wetlands and habitats, reduce urban heat, and improve the quality of life for Connecticut's residents.

### WATERSHED LAND AND WATER RESOURCES

- **Protect watershed land and water resources to protect drinking water sources, reduce hypoxia conditions in Long Island Sound, increase the area of productive shellfish beds, and eliminate the number of beach action days:**
  - promote protective land use controls and establish and protect riparian buffers;
  - eliminate combined sewer overflows (CSOs) and sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs);
  - reduce the use of pesticides and herbicides; and
  - reduce impervious surface area.

Changes in weather patterns and precipitation can increase surface water runoff and combined sewer overflows impacting water quality. In 2023, the area of hypoxic conditions in Long Island Sound was approximately 28 percent greater than the previous ten-year average, and the number of closures and advisories for Connecticut's coastal beaches was approximately 21 percent greater than the previous ten-year average.

### LAND PRESERVATION

- **Enhance land preservation efforts by allocating resources so that the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and its conservation partners can better track and preserve, through acquisition or easement, priority conservation land;**
- **Clarify the intent of [Connecticut General Statute Section 7-131n](#) that any conversion of park land owned or in the care of municipalities be maintained as parks or if they must be converted for some other use, that parks be replaced at a greater than one-to-one ratio.**

The total area of land preserved as open space by DEEP is approximately 264,670 acres, even though the state's preservation goal is 320,576 acres by 2023. In addition, the Council estimates that only about 50,000 acres of farmland have been preserved through 2023; there is a statewide goal to preserve 130,000 acres of farmland.

## AGRICULTURAL LAND AND CORE FORESTS

- **Protect agricultural land and core forests by expanding the forest and farmland protections of Public Act 17-218\* to include any solar energy project within the jurisdiction of the Connecticut Siting Council.**

Certain solar facilities (projects with a capacity less than 2 megawatts (MW) and projects seeking a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need) are not required to consult with the Departments of Agriculture and Energy and Environmental Protection. \*Codified within [CGS 16-50k\(a\)](#).

## INCREASE RESOURCES FOR DEEP

- **Increase resources for DEEP and other agencies to:**
  - provide program administration and assistance to municipal wetland officials and commissions;
  - enhance land preservation efforts for open space, forests, and farmland;
  - protect and enhance habitats for all of Connecticut's flora and fauna;
  - review, at least every five years, the designation of species as endangered, threatened or of special concern, and areas identified as essential habitats, consistent with the provisions of Connecticut General Statutes Section 26-307;
  - incorporate consideration of the rising sea level in project planning and funding in shoreline communities; and
  - control the introduction and expansion of invasive species.

DEEP has insufficient staffing to adequately protect the state's natural resources and improve environmental quality. The adverse impacts of invasives affect all the state's land forms and ecosystems, from its waterways to its natural lands and also its working lands and developed landscapes.

## ABOUT THE COUNCIL

The Council on Environmental Quality (Council) is a nine-member board that was created in 1971. Council members donate their time and expertise. It is independent of DEEP (except for purely administrative functions).

The Council works with state agencies, non-governmental organizations, legislators, and the public to fulfill its legislatively assigned responsibilities to:

1. assess the condition of Connecticut's environment and report its findings annually to the Governor, and recommend actions to improve state environmental programs;
2. advise other state agencies on the environmental impacts of proposed construction projects;
3. investigate citizens' complaints and allegations of violations of environmental laws;
4. publish the Environmental Monitor (the official website for state project information under the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act and for notices of proposed sale/transfer of state-owned lands);
5. review Environmental Impact Evaluations that state agencies develop for major projects;
6. review telecommunications and energy proposals to the Connecticut Siting Council; and
7. advise on environmental issues, as directed by the Legislature and Governor.

## COUNCIL MEMBERS

Name	Appointed By	Appointed	Term Ends
Keith Ainsworth	Speaker of the House	Mar. '19	Mar. '27
Linda Bowers	Governor	Sep '24	Sep '32
Christopher Donnelly	Governor	May '23	May '31
David Kalafa	Senate President Pro Tempore	Apr. '19	Apr. '27
Aimee Petras	Governor	Aug '24	Aug '32
S. Derek Phelps	Governor	Apr. '24	Apr. '32
Denise Rodosevich	Governor	May '23	May '31
William Warzecha	Senate President Pro Tempore	Dec. '21	Dec. '29
Vacant	Speaker of the House		

To learn more about the Council, please visit [portal.ct.gov/ceq](http://portal.ct.gov/ceq). If you have questions or comments regarding the Council and/or its legislative recommendations, please contact the Council at [CEQ@ct.gov](mailto:CEQ@ct.gov) or 860-424-4000.